

**AUGUSTA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION STUDY
JOINT TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
AND CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
ROOM 802, MUNICIPAL BUILDING, AUGUSTA, GEORGIA
THURSDAY, AUGUST 11, 2010, 10:00 A.M.**

THOSE PRESENT:

Augusta-Richmond Co. Planning Commission

Paul DeCamp
Juriah Lewis
Marya Moultrie
Lynn Russell

CAC

Don Skinner
Walter Lamb
Butch Gallop
Willie Bell
Les Morton

GA DOT

Cissy McNure
Vonda Everett
Reuben Woods
Karen Quarles

City of Aiken

Sandra Korbelik

City of Augusta

David Griffith
Heyward Johnson

Aiken County

Gerald Jefferson
Stephen Strohming

Columbia County

Glen Bollinger

SC DOT

Bradley Reynolds
Kevin Gantt
Jim Frierson

Other

Jeff Carroll, Wilbur Smith & Associates

- 1. Consider approval of the minutes of the joint Technical Coordinating Committee and Citizens Advisory Committee meeting held on May 26, 2010.**

CAC – Mr. Bell moved to approve the minutes of February 10, 2010. Mr. Morton seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

TCC - Mr. Johnson moved to approve the minutes of February 10, 2010. Mr. Woods seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

- 2. Consider recommending approval of the 2035 ARTS Long Range Transportation Plan.**

Mr. DeCamp introduced this item and Mr. Jeff Carroll made a presentation on the 2035 ARTS Long Range Transportation Plan. Jeff Carroll, with Wilbur Smith Associates, is here to make a brief presentation on the final draft version of the LRTP. This project has been ongoing for about

ten months. This is the recommended final version of the plan. The public comment period is open for another four or five days. Comments have been received from FHWA and GA DOT and the City of Augusta has proposed to add two projects.

Mr. Carroll stated they have working on this update of the LRTP for the last ten plus months. Thanks were given to the participating organizations and staff for their help in preparing this document. This presentation will look at the base year, which is 2006... how the base year population and employment estimates are looking when projected to the year 2035. We will look at the highway conditions...will talk about revenues and expenditures expected to come in to the MPO and what it will cost for all the transportation projects. A list of the projects is included with the handout.

The study area includes all of Richmond County, portions of Columbia County, Edgefield County and Aiken County. Over the last ten months there has been an extensive public participation process. Six public meetings were conducted in the counties. The Advisory Committee, representing a variety of stakeholders in the study area, met three times to help direct and guide. The plans update process. Meetings also were held with minority communities (environmental justice) within the study area.

Partnership has been extremely important in this process. Being a bi-state MPO we had to work with GA DOT, SC DOT and all the different counties and municipalities within the study area. All the information you see today has been vetted through these partners. We looked at existing transportation plans and studies that have been done in the area to make sure those recommendations have been accounted for in this update. The base year (2006) and plan year (2035) socioeconomic data were updated as part of the technical analysis phase.

The base year population in 2006 is 406,860. The estimated population in 2035 will be 553,467 living in the study area. That study area boundary certainly could change with the 2010 Census. There will be approximately 146,600 new residents in 2035, reflecting a 1.2% annual growth rate. The socioeconomic estimates and projections were made by ARTS staff and others in each local jurisdiction. Richmond County is not growing as fast as the other counties. Edgefield County shows a 178% increase in population. The reason being it is that the Edgefield County part of the study area had an estimated 2,000 residents in 2006 and that is projected to increase to 5,000-6,000 in 2035. There are a lot of factors that will impact our highways, transit systems and other transportation modes.

On the employment side, the base year shows 162,219 with a projection to 209,788 in 2035. There will be 47,569 new jobs by 2035, reflecting a 1% annual growth rate. At the county level, the percentages increase in employment will range from 28% to 32%. The medical complex, Fort Gordon, and the Savannah River Site, which is outside the study area, will continue to be among the largest employers.

When updating a Long Range Transportation Plan you have to use a travel demand model. This is where GA DOT assisted in the update. They operate and maintain the travel demand model for the MPO. This slide shows the base year 2006 Level of Service (LOS) on the major roads in the study area. Level of service A, B and C are the numbers you strive for and D, E and F you stay away from. Congestion is not too extensive in the base year, based on 24-hour traffic counts. In the year 2035 Columbia County's arterials are showing increased congestion. Pockets of

congestion are also evident around I-520 in Augusta and in Aiken. We looked at the projects in the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan and for any new projects that could be added to help alleviate the congestion such as new roadway locations, widening, intersection improvements, park and ride facilities, bicycle and pedestrian system. You obviously cannot continue to just widen roadways to alleviate the congestion. You need to increase the use of other modes of transportation. One of the biggest ways is to increase the use of public transportation. There are three transit providers in the study area. The main issue for transit systems is to have sufficient operating funds to provide or increase the service.

Most everyone is aware that air quality has been an issue here and may become more of an issue when EPA completes the reconsideration of the federal ozone standards. The ozone standards will likely be strengthened, thereby increasing the likelihood of nonattainment designation for part of the ARTS area. In updating the Long Range Transportation Plan, it was assumed that the projects will be subject to air quality conformity testing mandated for nonattainment areas.

The two key metrics for air quality are vehicle miles travelled and vehicle hours of travel. In 2006 there were almost 11 million daily miles of travel on the MPO roadways. In the 2035 no build scenario, it jumps to almost 16 million daily vehicles miles travelled. By comparison, vehicle hours of delay are projected to increase from about 324,000 hours in 2006 to approximately 600,000 hours in 2035 under the no build scenario. Under the financially-constrained plan vehicle hours of delay increase to 549,000 hours, which is 19% lower than under the no build scenario. If the study area is designated nonattainment, the projects in the plan should withstand air quality scrutiny depending on emissions budgets set by the two states.

Over the next 25 years, the total projected revenue for transportation projects is \$3.2 billion for the Georgia part of the study and \$284.7 million for the South Carolina part. Ninety percent (90%) is federal and state funding with 5% local and 3% for transit (federal / state) and 4% local public transportation. The projected revenue is based on historic trends and reflects about 2.5 percent increase in funds each year.

On the Georgia side, the Long Range Transportation Plan shows that 77% of the money will be spent on capacity projects. The survey results indicated that people are looking for other transportation options. Public transportation gets about 7% of the funds and bicycle and pedestrian projects will get three percent. Intersection improvements (2%), maintenance and operations (6%), bridge projects (3%), park and ride projects (1%) and safety projects (1%) are included as well.

On the South Carolina side 67% of the funding will be used on capacity projects, 17% on public transportation, 5% on bicycle and pedestrian projects, 10% on intersections and just less than 1% (\$1.2million) on park and ride projects.

Balancing expected revenue and expenditures is one requirement of the plan update process. Project costs are based on a 4% inflation rate compounded. The Long Range Transportation Plan is financially constrained because projected expenditures do not exceed projected revenue. Projects on the Georgia side have \$3.02 billion available funding compared to \$2.7 billion in expenditures. South Carolina has \$285 million in available funding and \$250 million in expenditures. A complete list of projects can be viewed on the ARTS website.

Projects in the Long Range Transportation Plan are divided into three tiers. Tier I is from 2011 - 2014, which are the current Transportation Improvement Program years. Tier II is for the years 2015 through 2024 and Tier III cover the years 2025 through 2035. The plan will be updated every five years and can be amended at any time it is needed. In the event of nonattainment designation, the plan will be updated every four years.

As part of this process, a tool was developed to prioritize projects in the South Carolina part of the study area. This was done to comply with Act 114, which is a South Carolina law that requires all MPOs and COGs to use criteria to prioritize widening projects, intersection improvements and new location projects. South Carolina DOT was extremely helpful in the process of developing this tool.

The next step is for this body to make a recommendation to the ARTS Policy Committee on September 2, 2010. All the public and environmental justice meetings have been held. The public comment period ends this Monday, so there is still time to make any comments. The draft plan is available for review at all the area libraries, local government agencies, on the ARTS website and at other locations. GA DOT and FHWA have already made their comments and they will be addressed. The plan will be finalized within the next few weeks. Adoption of this plan is anticipated on September 2, 2010 by the ARTS Policy Committee.

Mr. Morton stated he is amazed at the numbers. The growth factor for Edgefield County is 178%, Richmond County is 14% and Columbia County is 27%. How were these numbers derived?

These are percent changes and not growth rates. The large percentage increase population in Edgefield County is due to the fact that the part of the county in the study area is relatively small. This part of the study area had an estimated 2,000 residents in 2006 and that is projected to increase to 5,000-6,000 in 2035. The population growth rate for the entire study area is about 1.2% per year. The socioeconomic estimates and projections were made by the ARTS staff. Richmond County is the largest county of the three counties population wise, but it is not growing as fast as the others.

What factors were taken into consideration when preparing the environmental justice study? Was it based upon population, race or socio economic factors?

An environmental justice study was not part of the Long Range Plan update. Federal Executive Order 12898 requires outreach activities to obtain input from low-income and minority communities regarding transportation needs and problems. An appendix to the Long Range Transportation Plan will provide details on all public participation activities, including meetings and other outreach to environmental justice communities in the study area. In updating the Long Range Transportation Plan public meetings were held with environmental justice communities. All comments have been documented and will be addressed in the final version of the plan.

CAC - Mr. Gallop moved to recommend adoption of the Long Range Transportation Plan update. Mr. Morton seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

TCC - Mr. Woods moved to recommend adoption of the Long Range Transportation Plan update. Mr. Johnson seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

3. Consider recommending approval of the ARTS FY 2011 - 2014 Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP).

Mr. DeCamp presented this item. Public information meetings were held in conjunction with the Long Range Transportation Plan update public meetings. Some things have changed since the draft TIP was approved in May. Projects that have moved to construction include the widening of Alexander Drive, the bridge reconstruction on SR 232 @ Uchee Creek in Columbia County and several ARRA- funded projects including resurfacing in all three of the counties. In addition, the Broad St. street light upgrade project is to begin early next month. Finally, both transit systems have either spent or obligated ARRA funds that were awarded to them. As far as changes to projects in South Carolina, construction of the Dougherty @ Silver Bluff Road intersection improvements has shifted from FY 09 to FY 10. Construction on the Silver Bluff Road corridor project has been shifted from FY 2012 to FY 2013 and the planned park and ride lot at Exit 5 on I-20, which was added to last year's TIP, has been added to the FY 2011-14 TIP.

Regarding projects in Georgia, the Bobby Jones Expressway widening project (PI #210700) has a slight increase in funding for construction and utilities. Funding in the amount of \$453,166 has been added for preliminary engineering on the median barrier project on Gordon Highway (PI # 222710). Due to financial constraint, the majority of funds for right-of-way on the SR 56 / Mike Padgett Highway project (PI #0006431) have been shifted to FY 2013. An additional \$2.6 million has been programmed for right-of-way on the Windsor Spring Phase IV widening project (PI # 250610).

In Columbia County, the Columbia Road widening project did not make right-of-way in 2010 so \$1.9 million is being programmed for right-of-way in 2011. Right-of-way funding for the Flowing Wells Road widening project was reduced from \$11 million to \$8.6 million due to financial constraints and the need to program other projects. The reconstruction of the bridge on Columbia Road at Walton Branch is a new project.

There were no substantial changes to transit, ITS or lump sum funding. Based on input from GA DOT, small amounts of funding were added for special studies on the Third Infantry Division Highway and the Fourteenth Amendment Highway projects. The MPO has been invited to be a part of the Expert Working Groups (EWP) established for these two studies. These studies will be undertaken by consultants hired by FHWA.

CAC – Mr. Gallop moved to recommend approval of the final FY 2011-2014 TIP. Mr. Morton seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

TCC – Mrs. Korbek moved to recommend approval of the final FY 2011-2014 TIP. Mr. Strohminger seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

4. Status of Projects:
(a) Georgia Highways

Mrs. Everett presented the status of highway projects for Georgia.

Road resurfacing projects to be let within the next three months include:

- SR 4 (Deans Bridge Road) from south of Tobacco Road to Brentway Drive
- SR 4 (Fifteenth Street) from Carver Drive to Walton Way
- SR 4 (Walton Way) from 15th Street to 13th Street
- SR 4 (Thirteenth Street) from 13th Street to the SC state line
- SR 10 (Gordon Highway) from east of SR 383 to North Leg Road
- Augusta State University History Walk - Phase IV (A Transportation Enhancement Project)

Status of projects not under construction:

- William Few Parkway Extension – Columbia County has resubmitted correct survey to DOT; the environmental document and permits are still being updated.
- Flowing Wells Road - work has been stopped due to funding issues; the turn lanes installed by Columbia County are working good at this time
- Old Petersburg / Old Evans Road - 225 of 284 parcels have been acquired
- Wrightsboro Road - 149 of 184 parcels have been acquired
- Windsor Spring Road Phase IV (PI# 250610) - Right-of-way was authorized on June 30, 2010 for \$7,272,815. Property owners meeting will be held on August 16 - 17, 2010 at Gracewood Community Center.
- I-520 Widening (Gordon Highway to Deans Bridge Road - right-of-way has been authorized and waiting on appraisals

ARRA Project updates include:

- Columbia County - bids were opened April 29. Contracts between GDOT and the county are under legal review in Atlanta. Once they are processed and returned a notice to proceed will be issued.
- Richmond County - The pre-bid meeting is tomorrow with a bid opening scheduled for August 17 for the resurfacing projects.
- Broad Street Traffic Signal and Street Light Upgrades from SR 28 to SR 4 (PI # 0009610) - the let date is May 21. Construction funds have been authorized. Six bids were received. The low bid was \$2,689,348

Mr. Morton inquired as to who is responsible for keeping Highway 25 and Bobby Jones maintained in terms of cutting grass and removal of trash accumulated along the roads.

Mrs. Everett stated GA DOT is responsible. GA DOT contracts for the mowing and picking up of litter along the highways. The contract calls for mowing these roads in two cycles - one in June and again at the end of summer.

Mr. Morton stated dead animals, trash, tires and furniture are making these roads look like a dump site.

(b) South Carolina Highways

Mr. Reynolds presented the status of South Carolina highway projects.

- US 1 / Richland Avenue in Aiken – this ARRA-funded resurfacing project is under construction.
- Silver Bluff at Dougherty Road intersection – the preconstruction conference will be held in the next two weeks
- Two enhancement projects in North Augusta will be advertised this week
- SC 1225 / East Buena Vista and Atomic Road have been combined into one project. The scope of work changed from a widening project to a corridor improvement project. A traffic analysis will be done to determine the best project for the corridor.
- US 25 @ Walnut Lane - a couple changes have been made to the plan and additional information has to be added to the environmental document. Once these documents are updated, right-of-way plans can be prepared.
- Silver Bluff / SC 302 - corridor improvements. SC DOT representatives have met with local officials and homeowners in the area. Changes have been made for driveways.

(c) Augusta Public Transit

Mr. Johnson presented this item. A public hearing was held on June 3rd regarding the elimination of the Medical Center transit route. Thirteen people were in attendance who opposed eliminating the route. The Augusta Public Service Committee voted to eliminate the route on July 9, 2010. A week later calls were received from the Augusta Commissioners with complaints from Irvin Towers. They complained of not receiving notice about elimination of the route. The Walton Way route was changed to serve Ervin Towers and the route headway was increased from 30 to 40 minutes.

A grant application for \$8 million was submitted to FTA to pay for the purchase new transit vehicles and for the engineering and design work for the new maintenance facility on Highway 56 and to move the current transfer facility from Broad Street to the Regency Mall area.

The three buses that are on order will be delivered in October. The Augusta Commission approved the purchase of two new Orion buses with a scheduled deliver date of June 2011.

(d) Aiken County Transit

Mr. Lewis presented this item as sent by email from Mrs. Lynnda Bassham (LSCOG).

- Aiken County Council restored part of the funding that was lost in FY 2009-2010 for operation of the Best Friend Express and Dial-a-Ride. We have formed a new advisory group for the system and are incorporating some requested route improvements that have come from requests from passengers and our elected officials.
- On August 17th LSCOG will be holding a ribbon cutting and grand opening celebration for the launch of our new Travel Management Coordination Center as an expansion of our Aging and

Disability Resource Center. At one call or click the public will be able to access information about transit resources and options throughout the six-county region, and to get help from mobility managers to find a ride or to solve transit problems and issues. The center will also use intelligent transportation technology to lead coordination among public and human service transit providers in the six counties, and on board partnering agency vehicles. Both fixed route and demand-response vehicles will have automatic vehicle location and mobile data computers on board as well as digital radios equipment that link to law enforcement and emergency management in the event of an emergency. A new telephone system will link to interactive voice response software to make reverse calls to passengers to remind them of appointments and imminent arrivals of pick-ups.

- The Building Expansion to house this new Aging, Disability and Transportation Resource Center (ADTRC) was funded through urban ARRA transit funds. Staff moved the Resource Center into the new 3,000 square foot space in mid June. A ribbon cutting on August 17th will formally celebrate this accomplishment!
- Two new 17 passenger buses are wrapped with enhanced design work and are already receiving positive comments from passengers using the Best Friend Express.
- New bus shelters are going up at the campus of Aiken Regional Medical Centers, USC-Aiken and the Housing Authority in Aiken.

5. Update on Special Studies Projects:

(a) Special Studies in Aiken County

Mr. Jefferson presented this item. The US 1 / US 78 study contract has been awarded to Wilbur Smith Associates for \$315,000. The Aiken County Council has approved this selection. This will be an 18-month project that will cover US 1 / US 78 from the Savannah River to Hitchcock Parkway in Aiken. We are undertaking this study because of all the economic development along the corridor in the last ten years. Traffic on the thoroughfare is increasing so we want to look at the function of the roadway and land use along the corridor. Bike and pedestrian facilities will also be addressed as part of the study.

Wilbur Smith Associates also is the consultant for the Aiken County travel demand model study. All the economic data has been submitted and the model has been run. The 95-page document will be ready to review during the same time as the Long Range Transportation Plan update.

Mrs. Korbely presented the North Side Road study. This project is on scheduled and is due to be completed in October.

6. Update on Air Quality Initiatives

(a) Aiken County

Mr. Jefferson and Mrs. Korbely presented this item. A letter of recommendation was sent to DHEC on Monday. Two additional endeavors were added that Aiken County is working on to

improve air quality. It suggested that there were two small towns / municipalities they were splitting in half with their boundaries. It doesn't make sense that one side of the street be included and not the other when looking at air quality boundaries in a small town or municipality. The recommendation is to either include or exclude all of the town or municipalities.

(b) Richmond County

Ms. Moultrie presented this item. EPA is due to complete the reconsideration of the ozone air quality standards at the end of this month. In light of these standards being released, a meeting of the CSRA Air Quality Alliance will be held to discuss the new standards and what a potential nonattainment designation means for the area. The CSRA Air Quality Alliance website continues to be updated as needed. The Air Quality Initiatives Update for the ARTS study area has been posted to the website. So far, no comments or additions have been received. Additionally, information from the Clean Air Campaign is being distributed through the website, the ARTS newsletter, and through the email distribution list.

7. Issues and Concerns

(a) Prior -

Mr. Morton stated the exit sign off Wheeler Road to Bobby Jones indicates the left lane as the merge lane and the right lane is actually the merge lane. GA DOT stated at the last meeting, cars in the right lane are supposed to merge to the left lane. This is an "optical illusion" because the road looks as if it should be merging the opposite way and cars are merging the wrong way.

The concern will be forwarded to Mr. Mike Keene with GA DOT.

(b) Current / New -

There were no current or new issues to discuss.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "GAPatty".

George Patty, ARTS Project Director